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HOW EXTENSION WORKERS HAVE HELPED IN THE ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM

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OCT 14 1934
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A radio talk by H. W. Hochbaum, Extension Service, broadcast in the Land Grant College radio program, National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, October 17, 1934, by 50 radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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Success in meeting any crisis, as you know, depends very largely on the everlasting team work of the people affected and the forces which are called to aid. The farmers of America last year faced a terrible situation. Ruinous prices for their farm products had many of them down if not out. The task was that of raising farm prices to parity levels, to restore the purchasing power of the farmer. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration proposed that this could be done if the farmers would adjust their production of certain basic commodities to existing market situations.

The success which marks the country-wide campaigns to adjust production, the progress made in helping farmers to overcome a crisis are due in a very large measure to the team work of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the farmers themselves and the extension service.

The extension service is a national co-operative system of rural education which works from the grass roots up. In nearly 2700 counties of the nation, county agricultural agents serve as local key men of that system in meeting those agricultural problems which are most significant locally. These agents draw to the work thousands of local farm leaders. These leaders help the agents in organizing and planning and in interesting their neighbors in adopting the various recommendations. In times of emergency this widespread and well organized system is ready to serve the Federal government as a means by which the rural people may be quickly informed and prepared to meet emergencies which confront them and the nation as a whole. Consequently, the extension service was charged by the Administration to aid the government in the herculean efforts to meet the agricultural crisis, to improve and stabilize the rural economic situations.

This Agricultural Adjustment Administration was set up in 1933 to carry out the provisions of the adjustment act. This organization drew upon the best resources in the Department of Agriculture, the State Colleges and counseled with leading farmers all over the country in developing the now-familiar wheat, tobacco, cotton, corn-hog and other adjustment programs. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration developed the plans, outlined the campaigns, prepared the necessary legal documents, drafted the educational material and organized the machinery necessary in the general administration of these different projects.

The administration of these adjustment programs in each county was entrusted to the farmers themselves. Local production adjustment associations made up of those farmers who signed contracts were organized, and the co-operating farmers elected their own directors and committees to administer affairs locally. Such associations set up their own budgets for the local administrative costs are paid by the co-operating farmers themselves. Thus was administration decentralized and made as democratic as possible.

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There was need for arousing a nation-wide consciousness of the economic emergencies--their causes and the necessity for adjusting farm production that these situations might be met. The details of the remedies proposed, the operation of the adjustment programs, had to be made clear to millions of farmers. A new economic philosophy, a new approach to economic problems, had to be taught.

County extension agents, specialists, supervisors, were the front line forces. They held countless meetings of rural people; they sought out and encouraged many thousands of farmers to serve as local committeemen; they trained such committeemen in organizing and directing county control associations. Extension agents explained the changing economic situations and how these affect farm incomes. Farmers by the thousands were led to be interested in economic facts. Extension agents and committeemen explained the requirements of the adjustment contracts; they interpreted the various rulings and regulations; they showed farmers how to make out their contracts and associated documents. The county agent's office was the information and organization center; the clearing house for all the adjustment programs in a County.

The program of Agricultural Adjustment is probably the largest program for aiding rural people that has ever been carried on. The number of agencies involved, the amount of educational material distributed; the numbers of meetings held; the numbers of local leaders trained and employed, and the great numbers of individual farmers helped, all seem beyond belief. We have about six million farms. About three million farms were signed up in the campaigns to adjust production in wheat, corn-hogs, tobacco and cotton. Over 4500 county control associations have been organized, directed, set to work and are carrying on magnificiently. The benefits which have come to the participating farmers seem tremendous. The campaigns for adjustment have been eminently successful. The team work of farmers, the adjustment administration officials and the extension service has been outstanding. A crisis is being overcome. New problems on other fronts--devastating drought as well as needed adjustments in other basic commodities likewise are being fought in this same spirit with good team work.